

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, DC 20555
Phone 301-415-8200 Fax 301-415-2234
Internet:opa@nrc.gov

No. 95-151

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Wednesday, December 13, 1995)

NRC STAFF PROPOSES TO FINE PSE&G \$100,000 FOR FOUR ALLEGED
VIOLATIONS OF NRC REQUIREMENTS AT THE HOPE CREEK NUCLEAR
GENERATING STATION

The staff of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has cited Public Service Electric & Gas Company (PSE&G) for four alleged violations of NRC requirements at its Hope Creek Nuclear Generating Station in Lower Alloways Creek, New Jersey. The staff has proposed a \$100,000 fine.

The alleged violations were found during an August NRC inspection in response to an event that occurred July 8 through 9 during which operators inadvertently reduced cooling to the shutdown reactor.

The reactor was manually shut down July 8 to repair an inoperable control room chiller. During the subsequent cooldown, operators failed to correctly implement a procedure that required that the reactor recirculation pump suction and discharge valves be alternately opened and closed, for each 75 degree temperature drop in the isolated loop, in order to preclude thermal binding of the recirculation pump discharge valves. Once the discharge valves were open, the valves were not closed, as required by the procedure, (for almost 20 hours in one case, and for approximately two hours in the other case) causing shutdown cooling flow to bypass the reactor vessel.

The resultant decrease in decay heat removal led to an increase in the reactor coolant system temperature and pressure, and an inadvertent and undetected change in the plant's operational condition from cold shutdown to hot shutdown for more than 8 hours. In addition, this procedural violation caused a loss of temperature monitoring capability provided by the shutdown cooling system because the Residual Heat Removal (RHR) heat exchanger inlet temperature indicator no longer provided a valid indication of average reactor coolant system temperature.

PSE&G was cited for the following alleged violations:
1) failure to correctly follow a written procedure for operation of the reactor recirculation system; 2) failure to maintain two operable shutdown cooling loops of the RHR system; 3) failure to maintain operability of the RHR isolation system for reactor vessel high pressure; and, 4) entering hot shutdown from cold shutdown without two independent operable main steam isolation valve sealing system subsystems as required by the plant technical specifications.

In a letter to PSE&G, NRC Region I Administrator Thomas T. Martin said, "The NRC recognizes that the event had no direct adverse effect on the health and safety of the public or plant personnel, and adequate plant systems, such as the Emergency Core Cooling Systems, were available to add inventory to the reactor vessel and remove decay heat in the event of a complete loss of shutdown cooling function. Nonetheless, the event was safety significant in that two required primary fission product barriers, namely, the reactor coolant system fission product barrier and the primary containment fission barrier, were in a degraded condition with the plant in the hot shutdown condition."

The base civil penalty of \$50,000 for the four violations was doubled because the licensee did not identify, nor correct the violations in a timely manner, and because the plant has had previous escalated enforcement action in the past two years.

The licensee has 30 days either to pay the proposed fine or to request in writing that part or all of it be withdrawn. The company also has 30 days to admit or deny the alleged violations and to describe the actions it has taken or plans to take to prevent recurrence.

The States of New Jersey and Delaware have been informed of this enforcement action.

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